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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SARAJEVO 001614

SIPDIS

EUR/SCE FOR HYLAND, FOOKS, STINCHCOMB; NSC FOR HELGERSON

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [BK](#)

SUBJECT: BOSNIA: SREBRENICA MAYOR'S OFFICE RETAINED BY
BOSNIAKS

REF: A. SARAJEVO 1593

[B](#). SARAJEVO 1571

[C](#). SARAJEVO 1449

Classified By: Michael J. Murphy, Political Section Chief, for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: SDA candidate Osman Suljic won the mayor's office of Srebrenica, carrying with him a significant number of seats for the SDA-SBiH coalition in the municipal assembly, though fewer than SDA previously held. The resounding defeat of SDP's Hakiya Meholjic, and the cooperative tone Suljic struck with second-place (ethnic-Serb) SNSD candidate Milos Vukosavljevic offer Srebrenica the best hope of a productive municipal administration it has seen in years. Suljic's "jobs first" approach to Srebrenica's problems undoubtedly appeals to Srebrenica citizens, and offers a political agenda not centered on ethnicity. Suljic's professed commitment to work cooperatively with SNSD is good news, given the lack of an SDA majority in the assembly. End Summary.

Bosniaks retain the mayor's office

[1](#)2. (U) SDA candidate Osman Suljic won a clear victory in the Srebrenica mayoral race, taking 3,622 of a total 9,918 votes cast, according to preliminary results provided by the BiH Central Election Commission (CEC). Interestingly, Suljic took only 1,134 votes from within the municipality, but added 293 absentee votes by mail, and 2,195 votes from outside the municipality (that is, the votes of citizens who, prior to the war, had been residents of the Srebrenica municipality and were successfully re-registered in a process we sponsored). SNSD candidate Milos Vukosavljevic got a total of 2,727 votes, of which all but two were cast geographically within Srebrenica. Both parties took similar proportions of the municipal assembly vote (see below).

Meholjic falls far behind

[1](#)3. (C) Despite early concerns that SDP candidate Hakiya Meholjic could draw significant enough numbers of votes away from Suljic to split the Bosniak vote, his performance on election day was surprisingly poor. We assess that Suljic's divisive personality, checkered past, and connections to recently re-arrested wartime commander-cum-gangster Nasir Oric all contributed to his defeat. Preliminary results give Meholjic 1,877 votes, of which 438 were cast in Srebrenica, 199 received by mail, and 1,320 were from persons registered as residents of Srebrenica in 1991 who now reside outside the

municipality.

Dodik claims SNSD victory before votes are counted

¶4. (SBU) On October 6, SRNA news agency, and RS PM Dodik, portrayed SNSD's Vukosavljevic as winning the mayoral race in Srebrenica. This claim was based on the number of votes Vukosavljevic had gotten from voters physically present in Srebrenica. Dodik neglected to mention some 3,500 votes not yet counted from Srebrenica voters outside the municipality, most of which were expected to go to a Bosniak candidate. The same morning, hours prior to Dodik's statements, we sat with SDA candidate Suljic while he received a call from Vukosavljevic congratulating him on his victory, and asking for a job in Suljic's administration. If Vukosavljevic believed he had even an outside chance of winning, such a call would certainly not have taken place. Suljic told us he plans to offer Vukosavljevic the head of the municipality's economic office, and to invite other ethnic Serbs to join his future administration.

SDA, SNSD take most assembly seats

¶5. (U) Bosniak parties as a whole maintained a position of strength in the municipal assembly. The SDA-SBiH Alliance won 11 seats, taking 39.8 percent of votes cast (though this is a significant decrease from the 15 seats the two parties previously held). Though SDP candidate Meholjic fared poorly in the mayoral race, SDP appears to have done even worse in

SARAJEVO 00001614 002 OF 002

the municipal assembly vote, taking just two seats in the assembly, in fourth place with a mere 7.5 percent of the vote. Snaga Bosne took an additional two seats, and one ethnic minority seat went to the Social Democratic Union-2002, a party likely to vote often with Bosniaks. This means Bosniak parties and likely allies won 16 of 27 seats.

¶6. (U) On the Serb side, SNSD came in second place, taking 7 seats with 27.3 percent of the vote. This represents a near-doubling of their four seats in the outgoing assembly. The Alliance of Serb Parties (SDS-PDP-SP), in third place, took 11.8 percent of the vote, and will hold three seats (a decrease from the five seats SDS and PDP previously had). The Democratic National Alliance maintained its one seat. In total, Serb parties won 11 of 27 seats.

¶7. (U) Bosniaks can, in theory, cobble together a majority in the assembly, but only if SDA, SBiH, SDP, and Snaga Bosne vote together. Practically speaking, SDP's acrimonious tone during the campaign makes this difficult, and highlights the need for SDA and SNSD to find a modus vivendi in order to get any meaningful work done.

Comment

¶8. (C) Our political and monetary support for the re-registration of pre-war residents paid off, and was decisive in the mayoral race. Suljic's victory was the best possible outcome in comparison to the prospect of emotional and political fallout from a Serb victory, or a divisive Meholjic administration. Suljic has promised us that he will be committed to the economic development of the municipality, and will seek out qualified Serbs and other minorities to participate in his administration. This is good news, given SDA's plurality in the assembly, and SNSD's strengthened position. We plan to hold him to his promise. End comment.

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